



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council N°1078 Vienna, 19 November 2015

EU Statement on Memorial Human Rights Centre, Russian Federation

The European Union expresses its deep concern about a recent report of the Russian Ministry of Justice about the respected organisation “Memorial Human Rights Centre” in which the Ministry concluded that Memorial HRC, “undermined the foundations of the constitutional order of the Russian Federation by calling for the overthrow of the current government and a change of the political regime”. Moreover, the Ministry has recently listed the Saint Petersburg Memorial branch in the “foreign agent” register, taking the number of Memorial branches listed as “foreign agents” to five and that of Russian NGOs with such label to 101. Unfortunately, this is not the first time that Memorial has been the target of harassment by the Russian authorities.

Mr Chairperson,

Independent civil society has an essential role to play in promoting respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. They perform an important and legitimate role in informing public debate about government policies including by criticising them. There are thousands of NGOs across the OSCE area that provide critical comment about governments’ actions on a daily basis. This is a normal function of a genuine democratic process.

We have on many occasions expressed our deep concern about the so-called “law on foreign agents” and the “law on undesirable organisations” in the Russian Federation. We repeat our call on the Russian government to ensure that its legislation and its implementation conforms to international human rights standards including OSCE commitments.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA countries ICELAND and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE and GEORGIA align themselves with this statement.

* The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.